

Songs Of The Underworld

by
Clem Yore







Songs of the Underworld

By
CLEM YORE

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*You may jeer and sneer at the written tear,
You may laugh in dissembling glee,
But your best, by test, will manifest
These truths of a verity.*



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Foreword

I wrote these verses in the hope that I might prevent some person from making the journey to the *Slough of Sighs*, where souls are lost and minds are cast away—and to give hope to some who, marooned, view with tearful eyes our ships sail past their isle of woe, that some day there will come a vessel to pick them up and carry them into a port where life may be lived anew.

The Prude I despise; the Christian by rule and rote, I pity—for he builds his own hell. To the critics who condemn my language I want to say—"Uncover your ears and worse you will hear mixed with the laughter of children, for such words are a part of your life."

There is a ceaseless war between the sexes. When will the bugles of peace be sounded and the world run glad by the rules of right? Criticism of Wrong is Mind's most worthless excrement.

Erecting signposts to guide the Lost from the morass of flesh frailty is a duty for real men; but all of us can at least say these words and obey them:

My criticism of my fellow is an infinite silence.

It will help the one who speaks this sentence to feel sweeter, more satisfied with himself, and will enable him to toss less, when he comes to die, upon the bed of his conscience.

The Author

Songs of the Underworld

The Sobs of the Lost

*These are the sobs of the lost, in verse,
Their sighs and cries and moans;
These are the wails of the wretched ones
Rhymed in wormwood tones.
Ever they muster courage,
And ever we cast them down;
The reeking, tainted heel-taps,
Foul leaven of the town.*

*If the rhymes of the wretched appal you,
Wipe the dirt from your window pane,
Take a good long look, down your narrow
street,
Turn your conscience loose again;
Then you'll see the trails of the lost ones,
You'll hear those harrowing cries
That are seldom written in verses,
But always in memories.*

*You may jeer and sneer at the written tear
You may laugh in dissembling glee,
But your best, by test, will manifest
These truths of a verity.
Deep in your hidden heart there lies,
The scars of sinful thought
But you were made to be afraid;
Your lusts were slyly wrought.*

*Then list to the sobs of the lost, I say,
And do some thinking too;
And judge the race of the Underworld
As did the mournful Jew;
And drop your stone by the roadside,
Go you back to Jerusalem.
Never learn how to criticise;
That will be your diadem.*

Songs of the Underworld

The Harlot and the Nun

Two figures lay in the morgue,
Dragged from the river deep:
A harlot was one, the other a nun,
Wrapped in endless sleep,
With a cake of ice at their shoulders,
And nobody there to weep.

The features were much distorted,
Only the clothes could name,
Which was the nun, and the other one
The woman lost to shame;
But the clothes were taken away,
When the coroner's deputy came.

And somehow their garments were mixed,
And thus when identified,
The fallen one became the nun,
And she was sanctified;
And the holy sister was buried alone
As though her shame to hide.

The woman of shame lies honored,
In Calvary's holy ground,
While Sister Celeste always will rest
'Till the very last trumpets sound,
As nineteen hundred and eight,
In a city's nameless mound.

So only the Master knows them
From the records of the mind;
"Judge not," He said, "the quick nor dead
Lest ye be judged in kind;"
For woman's woes are many,
And the human eyes are blind.

Songs of the Underworld



Chung Hi Lo and Mary

Chung Hi Lo is a Chinaman
And he lives at Polk and Clark,
And he only paddles around at night
When the town is damp and dark;
And he runs a place in a basement
Lit by a taper's spark.

This is the story of Mary
Who was seen by Chung Hi Lo.
Like some cashiers, of tender years,
Mary wanted to know
"What went on in those basements
Where 'slumming parties' go."

Songs of the Underworld

She went with a crowd to this basement

Run by Chung Hi Lo.

He slipped her a ring, a golden thing,

As he smirked and bended low,

And the lure of the place got into her blood

And called where e'er she'd go.

She is hitting the pipe in this basement,

And her cheeks are chalk-like cheeks,

And she's been dreaming, drearily dreaming,

For weeks, and weeks, and weeks,

But Lo cooks her "hop" deliciously

As fanciful words he speaks.

Some day she'll float in the river;

This is the end alway,

When her fair eyes fade and another maid

Charms her Lo away,

And she will be known as missing,

Missing 'till judgment day.



Songs of the Underworld

The Halo on the Snow

The December wind was wailing,
And sobbing around Saint Anne.
And snow drifts dragged destruction,
As far as the eye could scan.
And the choir was at rehearsal,
And the lights were burning low—
Reflecting a stained glass Jesus,
Upon the drifting snow.

Huddled deep in a snow drift
A child of the streets lies dead.
With the richly stained glass Jesus,
Blessing his childish head.
He was only the spawn of the city.
He was church'd at old Saint Anne
And Father Obrien for want of a name,
Christened him Danny Magann.

Often he wondered who he was,
Daily he stood the jibe.
Of Jew and Gentile newsboy,
Born of a Ghetto tribe.
Until this night he realized,
Tomorrow was Christmas day
Feverly weak, he dropped on his knees,
Deep in the snow to pray.

And as he was praying the shadow,
Came softly o'er the snow
And the cruel snow drifts gripped him
Like the world grips with woe.
“*Peace on Earth*” the choir sang,
As his soul arose in flight,
And Jesus' halo 'round his head.
Made a gibbous-ghastly sight.

Songs of the Underworld

The Underworld

*This is a yarn of the Underworld.
The woeful, weary, Underworld—
Shrivelled and shrunk, sinful, core.
Drivelled and drunken; cancerous sore.
The entrance place to the pits of hell—
Where hopeless, hapless, harpies dwell,
The Underworld.*

Hark! to the cries of the Underworld!
List to their sobs and moans!
Blush when you hear their curses
That chill your very bones.
For they are lost and the hateful,
They are the city's sores,
Each day they die by hundreds,
Beside your very doors.

You fathers and mothers, attention!
What do you know might come?
Into your life to wreck your joy,
To devastate your home.
Little you think your daughter,
Runs risk of vice and blame.
Little you think your growing boy,
Will cause some woman shame.

You fathers who sit and lord it,
Now that your oats are sown,
Can a hundred women number
The harlots you have known?
As you kiss your little baby,
And you scold your hopeful wife,
Do you ever look back and ponder,
At your deceitful life?

Songs of the Underworld

Do you remember your twenties?
And likewise your thirties too?
And have you changed your ways, I ask?
Is any one on to you?
Is your name still known in the "district?"
Do you maintain a flat?
Have you a child lost somewhere,
That you would call a brat?

Think of these human beings,
Whimpering in their woe.
Of course you can't correct them,
This I surely know.
But you can watch your daughter
And you can teach your son,
Not to ruin a maiden,
Like you perhaps have done.

Never to tell a woman,
A lie that will break her heart,
And never to gloat on cunning ways,
Or play a dastard's part.
Teach the deeds of the master,
Not some infernal creed.
The world wants human action,
Tenets it does not need.

Then you, you polished plutocrats,
Wild on business bent,
Pay an honest wage to your workers,
To show your sure intent.
It will help a lot in doing
The things you claim should be,
Done—for our social evil,
Done—for humanity.

And when you sit on juries,
And see some cringing crook,
Just close your eyes a moment,
And take an inward look.

Songs of the Underworld

And then make up your sober mind
To do as you think is right,
I'm sure you'll see your duty
In a very lurid light.

How many of you are landlords
To Pansy, or Rosie, or Belle?
How many souls in your houses
Carboliced into hell?
Don't you always of a Sunday,
Go to church and pray?
When you know your wantoned tenants,
Are roping all the day?

How many of you own tenements,
Reeking and rotten too,
Where your agent drives like a slaver,
Collecting the rent for you?
Where childish fingers earn a dime;
For all of a half a day's toil—
And childish bodies, bend and break,
Beneath the midnight oil.

Each *city* has its tenderloin
Each *town* its *house* of shame,
And you and I, and all the world
Contribute to the blame.
The thing to do is obvious,
Our task is clearly plain.
Rightly teach the growing child,
And we ourselves abstain.

This is the yarn of the Underworld.
The woeful, weary, Underworld.
Shrivelled and shrunken, sinful sore,
Drivelled and drunken; cancerous core.
The entrance place to the pits of hell—
Where hopeless, hapless, harpies dwell.
The Underworld.

Songs of the Underworld

Where Lines Are Straight

Show me a place where men are many,
And straight lines pierce the sky.
I'll find larceny, villany, tympany,
And watch humanity die.

Show me a tangle of ferns and flowers.
Where lines are never straight,
I'll find bowers, and towers, and showers,
And nothing insensate.

Place me on pavements, scraped by the feet,
Of wives and women who fall,
And I will greet, unmeet and sweet,
And learn to hate them all.

Give me a sniff of the gladden air
That breathes of a summer morn;
There'll be no sting, nor hateful thing,
Or memories forlorn.

Give me the horizon round as a ring,
Hemmed with a matchless sky;
Where wild birds sing and echoes ring,
And all is harmony.

Don't make me gaze down a narrow street,
Where two lines meet afar,
Where the walls defeat, and cramp and beat,
The best of the things that are.

* * * * *

*Place me where the sheltered fern,
And sky-blue violets grow.
And I will yearn, for power to learn
Of good things here below.*

Songs of the Underworld

Yawning

In this world of great bliss,
Get joy from a kiss,
And everyday wear quite a smile.
If you take, and don't give,
I am sure you won't live,
In a manner that's really worth while.
There is joy in a song, the whole night long,
And the gloom hour, of course, is the dawn.
Of all things we do, to make us feel blue
Is to drowse—and to droop—and to yawn.

REFRAIN

Yawning, yawning, just at the break of day,
Dawning, dawning, folly slips away.
I live at night, in the 'lectric light,
And I never admire the dawn,
I am weepy, and sleepy, feel sheepy, and
creepy,
As I yawn—yawn—yawn.

The bubbles that shine—
In a glass of old wine,
Hold a strange fascination for me.
While dream music whirls,
'Mid laughter and curls—
Seems to carry me far out to sea.
I try then to spy, in the look of an eye,
The mid-day of love, or its dawn;
Then down comes regret and I seem to forget
All else save this fussy old yawn.

Songs of the Underworld



THE ALLEY RAT

Songs of the Underworld

The Alley Rat

*He lives in the regions where walls cave in,
The loathsome regions of worn-out tin,
The regions where shadows always dwell,
The regions alive, with the fumes of hell;
The alley rat,
The thing God spat
Upon the cobblestones,
The chill cobblestones,
The baked cobblestones,
The mocking, shocking, stones of
the town.*

Preachers and Prudes, listen! Can't you hear
The wails on the wind?
Do you know that all about you,
There is work for just your kind?
Among little hunched backed people,
Who dwell in the city's guts,
And little hunched brained people,
Who never get out of their ruts?

Don't send your pennies to China,
To save a heathen Chinee,
Who don't give a damn for religion,
Much less for the trinity.
Out of your warm rooms and hustle.
Go into the alleys dank.
Hear a ribald song on a young girl's lip,
Who never a God did thank.

Songs of the Underworld

Don't whisper your smirking lessons,
That tell of a vengeful God.
That sends to hell such creatures,
Who for years but hell have trod.
Look to the baskets and biscuits,
Look to the socks and shoes.
Lead the lost home from the hell holes,
Where they feed them only booze.

All women who erstwhile wanted,
The votes you now can cast,
Give a helping hand to the sister,
Whom the alley clutches fast;
Just a chance to earn a living,
Without painting red her cheek,
Unless you want that sister,
To live mid her filthy reek.

Orchids grow in the dampness,
Where never the sun will shine.
Alleys grow human orchids,
With a heart and a soul and a mind.
But what is the use of telling,
This tale as old as the sea.
If you won't take the hunch from Jesus,
You won't take the hunch from me.

*He lives in the regions where walls cave in,
The loathsome regions of worn out tin,
The regions where shadows always dwell,
The regions alive, with the fumes of hell;
The alley rat,
The thing God spat
Upon the cobblestones,
The chill cobblestones,
The baked cobblestones,
The mocking, shocking, stones of
the town.*

Songs of the Underworld

To the Woeful

I want to build castles for children;
Airy castles in fairy skies.

I want to trade a stock of laughs,
In exchange for woeful sighs.

I want to bring health to faces,
I want to make dull eyes shine;
With every day heaven to look at
And the practice of creeds divine.

I want to say to the courtesan,
"You're just as immortal as I.
Come, sit on the stoop beside me here,
'Tis not yet time to die.
I'll give you a part of my loaf of bread,
I'll give you a seat in my pew,
The Earth is my church—a living church,
Especially made for you."

I want to say to the convict,
"You're just as immortal as I."
Give me your hand with a fellowship grip
And gaze in my sinful eye;
For, Everyday I break some law
For which they walled you in;
Yet I am called a respectable man,
Though mentally I'm your twin.

I want to be "square" to the underworld
And to even a dog that is down
I'd rather be a painter of smiles
Than to carve a grewsome frown.
So sit you down by my bungalow
And we will enjoy the sky
For brothers and sisters, pals of woe,
You're just as immortal as I.

Songs of the Underworld

Who? Where? Why?

Alone I sit in my silent cell,
 Bereft as the world laughs by.
Alone I dream and cannot tell,
 The Who, the Where, the Why.
You may regulate and legislate,
 You may print and publish too.
The human heart's a thing apart
 From laws by such as you.

You may theorize upon the spawn,
 Of the kithless God on high,
You'll lose Thought's castle, to a pawn,
 Mere Who, or Where or Why.
You may cogitate and speculate.
 You may drink of learning much,
The only art springs from the heart,
 'Tis killed by Reason's touch.

Archaic night in ghastly mist
 Hung crimson in the sky.
There was no sound that one could list,
 Nor Who, nor Where, nor Why.
The finite rock, felt the infinite shock,
 There was no sea nor shore.
But one lone God—the silence trod,
 Sexless and gaunt—no more.

Formless he was in the pathless dark,
 Visionless was his eye.
"How came I here" was his remark.
 "O! Who? O! Where? O! Why?"
As babes we come, and want to play,
 As men, we moil, we try.
The echo will come back alway,
 "O! Who? O! Where? O! Why?"

Songs of the Underworld

Dog Days

It is hell when you are lonesome,
It is worse when you are blue,
It is sizzling hot, when you're forgot,
And you realize you're through.

These are the dog days, pardner,
You know just what I mean,
You sit alone, a worthless drone,
Clean sore on what has been.

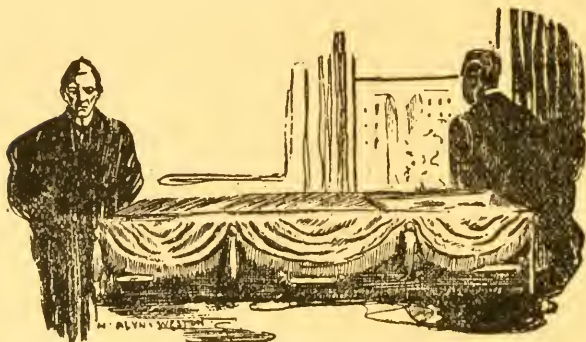
These are the dog days, sure enough,
And you are there today,
You sit and weep, and seldom sleep,
But you've learned how to pray.

You've had your fun, 'tis over,
The fiddler's time is come,
He wants his pay, now every day,
Rise up, and give him some.

Where are the girls who called you dear?
Where are the bright eyed pals?
All stung like you, and quite as blue,
Damning their bacchanals.

You are gouty, and grim, and sullen,
The dogs and kids hate you,
'Tis sizzling hot, and you're forgot,
And the hell of it is—you're through.

Songs of the Underworld



The Man About Town

In the gray dawn of a bleak, wet day,
A man about town in a casket lay.
His cheeks were cold with the chill of death;
His lips were still, unwarmed by breath.
Unwept, alone he passed away,
A man about town he was, they say.

Near the casket draped in gray,
No bud nor flower was seen that day;
But two men garbed in black severe
Stalked the room, so still and drear.
Their duty it was to bear away
The casket richly draped in gray.

The door is slowly opened wide.
A woman comes and stands beside
The casket, where the body lies.
With terror in her deep blue eyes
She views his form, and treads away,
Seeks her room and kneels to pray.

Songs of the Underworld

Next comes a woman, sweetly fair,
Looks searchingly and strokes his hair;
Stills a cry and leaves the room,
Her gleam of love now turned to gloom.
Red shame is weeping here today,
The dead man knew just how to pay.

Dressed in frills a dancer came,
With snarling lips and eyes aflame.
In she flounced with smothered curse,
Looked at him with hate athirst.
Tears then veiled her eyes of gray,
"I'm sorry," she sobbed, then went away.

In came a maid, with downcast eye,
Stifled moans and anguished cry.
Glanced at the brow so broad and fair,
She seemed to prove the man did care.
Her eyes were dimmed as she went away,
"He caused her sin," she heard them say.

Thus it was the whole morn through,
Maid after maid, and women too.
Just at noon, as the men were about
To close the coffin, there came a shout
Of a child, as a girl slipped in.
The babe she held told of his sin.

She saw his face was handsome still;
She thought of days when he lay ill,
Griped and racked with gnawing thought,
Pierced by shafts his follies wrought.
She pitied him, and without fear
Kissed his cheek, and murmured "Dear."

Songs of the Underworld

He welcomed death as though a friend;
To Conscience Hell it made an end.
The two men garbed in black severe
Bore him alone to his grave so drear.
In the land of souls he holds his sway,
Winner or loser, who can say?

Is it well to curse them living,
When their only crime is giving
Way to the imps that lurk within?
Their every act is not a sin.
They all are weak, who makes them so?
Does prince or prelate really know?



Songs of the Underworld

The Song of the Berry Black Eyes

Reared in a quaint little village,
Truly the belle of the place,
And her hair ideal, was really real,
Like the color that rosed her face.
And her berry black eyes,
Night-deep as skies,
Ne'er shown of woe a trace.

When her bright school days were over,
She was lured away to town.
With the Pipes o' Pan, a city man,
Played all her scruples down.
And her berry black eyes
Were not so wise
As she wore her first low gown.

In the tenderloin she's living now,
Not even the belle of the place.
And her hair ideal, has a sticky feel,
Like the rouge that hues her face.
And her berry black eyes,
We used to prize
Glimmer in dark disgrace.

Songs of the Underworld

My Desire

I would like to spread upon canvas,
The songs that sing in my heart.
I would love to bequeath my fancies,
To a master of deathless art.
I would like to enshrine my feelings,
In a gem from sunshine made.
I would love to mold my ideas,
In ruby of rarest shade.

I would like to capture the truant,
Troubadours of my mind:
And give to each the power to sing,
Songs of the untamed wind.
I would wish to tell my story,
That is singing in my soul.
Surrender hope of glory,
E'en deny my spirit's goal.

Yes! Barter, my very body,
Laugh at the devil's hiss.
Tantalize my better self,
And sneer at heaven's bliss.
This I would do—more, perhaps,
Had I the slender chance,
To know you wildly loved me,
To learn it from your glance.

The Gods should e'en be jealous,
Temples would rock on high.
And I'd be born a thousand times,
If I like this could die.
One joy alone, could fate withhold,
In realms of endless bliss;
And that would be, denying me,
Your damp, consuming kiss.

Songs of the Underworld

Give me that priceless kiss, my love,
Close thou, my eyes, on thee,
And let me feel the greatest joy
Known to ecstasy.
What more could God, or man desire,
What more is there to give?
'Twould be the land, where dreams come true,
And realizations live.

Songs of the Underworld



Down and Out

He's selling shoe strings on State Street,
And he drinks at Hinky Dink's—
And he never bathes 'til they make him;
But he thinks and thinks and thinks.
He is down and out,
He has gone the route,
There is nothing else to do;
He had his time,
When in his prime,
And yet—he is not through.

Songs of the Underworld

"Two Natures Struggling"

When the day is o'er, and night is down,
And gloom and revel, prevail o'er town,
The lamplight flickers, and winks at me,
The soft town wind wafts revery.
It is then, I seem to totter and fall,
And life's sweet cup, is turned to gall.

I feel two natures struggle within,
I hear the battle and list the din
Of trodden faith and great belief,
And hark to my soul's unrelief.
I feel the prison of crime and shame.
And demons calling, 'loud my name.

I madly rush to the city's edge,
Lurk with nature to gain a wedge,
Of faith and courage; to separate,
This worldly gnome from my soul's estate.
But I hear it laugh, like an imp of hell,
And I hear the toll of the midnight bell.

It is then I am conquered, led astray
From the paths of right in a sinful way,
So I join the imp with fiendish glee,
And murder my nature of purity.
I aid my reason to help me bear
This shame my spirit cannot wear.

Exemption I claim from godly laws,
As felons escape through legal flaws.
I put away shame, honor abort;
My body joins in this rakish sport.
I mount the ladder where lusts prevail,
A ladder two natures alone can scale.

Songs of the Underworld

I gain the heights and look around,
Strange music I hear mid carnal sound;
Of sin all brazen and laughing loud,
At a form I see 'neath a sombre shroud.
A still white bosom bears a double stain,
Thus body and soul are here made twain.

The shroud released falls swift aside.
I view my better self and to it stride,
I nurse it gently back to life,
The imp meanwhile is craving strife.
I see those eyes glance tenderly,
I feel warm arms encompass me.

And peaceful slumber droops my eye.
Ah, thus I see the black imp die.
Cowardly, cringing, moaning, sobbing,
Crying for mercy, vile heart throbbing,
I cast it out, and nestle close
To Better Self with sweet repose.

Yet every night, 'tis thus I see,
This battle wage incessantly.
Vain, bold self doth override
Virtue, truth, honor, pride.
Yet, before the dawn of day.
Lo! King Reason doth hold sway.

*Like roar of winds, on the boundless sea,
I feel two natures claiming me.*

Songs of the Underworld

The Hero of a Thousand Drunks

He is not one of the ancient hunks,
But a hero of a thousand drunks.
Ten thousand men he has laid away,
In Turkish baths at break of day.

Bold and bad, but filled with glee,
Bright and glad in company.
Let him alone, he's had his day,
Slip him a drink—and let him stay.

When he sleeps, nobody knows,
Yet always comes, and always goes,
Free lunch is his commissary,
The porter is his federary.

In cities far he charged the bar,
And never won a fight so far.
Yet he's game unto the core,
Always coming back for more.

One day I asked him with a laugh—
What he wished as an epitaph.
Bold and bad and filled with glee,
This is how he answered me.

*"He was not one of the ancient hunks
But a hero of a thousand drunks."*

Songs of the Underworld

The Cry in the Night

Cold, clammy hands and desert eyes,
Breath unsweetened, by heart wrung sighs,
Wishes and wants, and dank despair,
Filling the being everywhere.
Out of the night the wind is sighing,
Out to the past love is crying,
To conjure means to palliate,
The vice of wrong insensate.

High in air a star hangs bright.
A vision of the Past's delight.
Memory brings, like the breath of June,
A wealth of tone, as a harvest moon.
Low sinks a pallor, o'er the face
Of Love, as though it would erase,
All woelike hues, and seek afar,
The color of the distant star.

Out of the night—the wind is sighing.
Alone, and tearless, love is dying.
Somewhere a hated thing of red,
With foam-flecked lips, rears its head.
Laughs and mocks, and silently
Drives love away relentlessly.
And lo! The star, hung high o'erhead,
Looks down and weeps—for Love is dead.

Songs of the Underworld

The Desert of Lust

The whole earth seems to feel this desert's
 breath,
 Hushed voices sound the echoes of the dead,
About the undampened air moves stalking
 Death,
 Sentineled by vultures overhead.
It is the land of thirst and maddened men,
 The land where lies the whitened skull,
The region, where sighs and mournful ken,
 Disease memory and make it null.

Yonder, in the dim, blue distant lies
 Seemingly, a lake of dancing waves.
A full-rigged ship, sails in the skies,
 Miraged by luring desert knaves.
All about one seems to hear strange voices call,
 All color schemes save this are nil.
Into these thirsty sands heat rays fall.
 Fall for a purpose—the soul to kill.

Methinks the Desert is the meeting place of
 Hell.

 The spot where tortured souls are freed.
And that its awful silence is a cursed knell
 Sounding the doom of human creed.
And that each reptile crawling there has been,
 Perhaps, some wondrous man of brain.
Who creeps into his slimy pit unseen,
 Eternally to live his life again.

Songs of the Underworld



The Maquereau

Damned, debased, deceitful,
Lustful, lewd and lost;
Making damsels into dregs,
Reckoning not the cost.
Tangled at last by his victims
And into Hell is tossed,
The Maquereau

Cunning, craven and curlike,
Yoking youthful years,
To loathsome Paphian looseness,
Ribald jokes and jeers.
Draining his dirty dollars
From broken hearts and tears,
The Maquereau.

Songs of the Underworld

We of the City

It is chill and wet, and the sun has set,
Behind the sullen city,
It is cold and damp, where the dim street lamp
Looks on with barren pity.
Oh! the laughs that mock, and shock and block,
The very souls that melt,
Mid the snarling sneers, and jeers and tears,
Which in the air are felt.

It is man and stone, red flesh and bone,
Raised but to satisfy.
It is lustful fire, exposed for hire,
Which seems to carnify.
Oh! the brains that leap, and steep and sleep,
In the lust, and vice, and shame.
'Tis the awesome thrill, that kills and stills,
And defiles with Passion's flame.

What is name, or birth, or singular worth?
What is Honor, Truth, or Pride?
What matters it all, when at last we fall,
Stripped to our wantoned hide?
Oh! the pink, pink arms, and swarms of charms.
Hidden to tease and lure,
Oh! the calling eyes, with cries, and sighs,
Who cares if they're impure.

It is gold and wealth, and a deal of health,
To enable us better to be
Fit for the pace, with a frenzied face
Lined with iniquity.
'Tis the lying lip, we crave to sip—
That lures us to our dooms.
Oh! More is the pity, we love the city,
Where homes are naught but rooms.

Songs of the Underworld



The Worn Out Woman

At last I'm a worn out woman;
I have drank my fill of life.
I've had my share and more to spare,
I am anybody's wife.

I want a home and flowers and babies;
I want to believe I am good.
I crave a name without a shame,
To live as I know I should.

I know I cannot have it;
I'm not kidding myself I can.
I've paid the price and wedded vice;
I'd tarnish—a regular man.

Songs of the Underworld

I'd love to go home for my finish;
Home where the skies are blue
And there in bliss, feel a truthful kiss
From lips I knew were true.

* * * * *

But I am only a worn out woman
I must live *just* the same,
Drink the gall, and sate you all
'Till the pitiless end of the game.

Songs of the Underworld

When She Was Thirty-Three

You may speak of girls and sweethearts,
You may tell of your fairy queens.
I remember one, in days by-gone,
Who was all that a woman means.
Oh God! She was fair, most thrillingly fair,
Though only out of her 'teens.

Kisses she had by the millions
On her eyes and lips and arms.
And kissing ne'er hurts a youthful one,
Though it teaches and lures and warms.
But the nature of this maiden's kisses
I always viewed with alarms.

She made me forget my bible;
By the gleam of her wondrous eye;
And she made me forget the warning:
"Some day you'll have to die";
And I thought of no better heaven
Than in her arms to lie.

Have you ever caressed a woman
Whose lips could chill or burn
The very last shreds of your hammering heart
Or your virtuous vows o'erturn?
Then you know the kind of lessons
I was always glad to learn.

Songs of the Underworld

You cannot deny such a woman,
She would simply tease you to death
By the careless touch of her fingers
Or the warmth of her fragrant breath
Or her arms entwined about you
Like a pink and pulsing wreath.

She knew the gifts the Gods bestow
Upon idols they adore;
By winsome wiles and miles of smiles
She lured me to a shore
Of a dreamy land, a seemy strand,
As I whispered "Encore, encore!"

And then long days we nestled there,
Nestled hand-in-hand.
She laughed and lured and taught me
Full well to understand
This croonful shore, this tuneful shore,
This spot where cares disband.

Over and over she told me
She loved me and loved me well.
The songs she sung, when I was young,
Charmed me like a spell;
But we withstood the flaming fires
Of this hunger-maddened hell.

Songs of the Underworld

Ten and three long years have passed,
Now a photo she sends to me,
When I am gray at thirty-five
And she is thirty-three;
And the picture is captivating
And beckoning coaxingly.

There came a note with the picture,
A lure that would compel
Me to break my infinite irons
If I were chained in hell;
And I hungrily went to see her,
She without parallel.

AFTERWARDS

I have just returned from heaven,
Returned from her arms so rare,
Returned with her kisses wet on my lips;
Her kisses beyond compare.
And I think of the years that are wasted
And the few that are left to spare!

Songs of the Underworld

The Beast That Follows Me

There's an echo in my being,
 In the caverns of my life,
There's a quick, dead thing I never can forget;
 It comes to me in gelid gore
And I ne'er can warm it through,
 And I seem to feel it grippin' of me yet.
It is gray and gaunt and grewsome,
 And its hide is inches thick;
Its eyes are like a devil fish at sea;
 It is want and shame and horror
In its hide and hair and breath,
 And I feel it slowly creepin' up on me.

I've done my best to shake it,
 But it won't be jarred nor shook;
It always ambles with a nameless gait,
 It never wants to leave me,
And it will not pass me by,
 But it always seems contented just to wait.
When I try my best to lose it
 In my seeking of the throng,
'Tis then the devilish thing appears to flee;
 But when I reach the heart of night
With all its growing gloom,
 This slimy thing becomes my company.

In fear I've sought its backbone,
 Quite numb I've sought its eyes,
I've done my best to classify its kind;
 But its head is half before it,
Oft there is no head at all,
 And yet I feel this thing *must* have
 a mind.

Songs of the Underworld

It touches me on forehead,
 It grips my ankles tight,
It sucks the sweat from out my clammy brow;
 It has but one idea of time,
And that deals with the past;
 But I am living hourly with it now.

I've named this thing of muck and slime
 "The Old Imp Everywhere."
It knows no North nor South nor West nor
 East,
 'Tis neither fish nor mammal,
Man nor hideous female form—
 'Tis a creature of an idea, a rotten mental
 Beast.
'Tis my Nemesis and knows it,
 For it sneaks upon me when
I'm contented with my actions of today;
 'Tis my conscience-laden misdeeds
Piled up to break my back,
 'Tis the good things that I've owned
 and thrown away!

Songs of the Underworld

The Harlot's Farewell

I would not stay the March of Honor
I would not sway the heart to blame
I would not kill the sweet respect
But I would still the voice of shame.

What does it reck what I may feel
I most suspect my course is run
My heart is dry, my mem'ry floods
I'll smile, not cry, at the devil's fun.

In beauteous June or bleak December,
In passion, woe or the Ultimate,
I'll bless the joys I can remember
And try to reach some tranquil state.

Forget if you will and this you should
The time we lived, the paths we trod;
There's much in life misunderstood;
My ways are mine, I blame not God.

Perhaps 'tis best, though I doubt it so,
That all behind should there abide;
But please recall the long ago—
I'm sure that consience will not chide.

And in your moods of retrospection
Remember this as word most true,
Esteem, and Honor and Affection
Will ne'er outweigh my love for you.

Songs of the Underworld



BY ALYN WESTON.

DOWN AT THE CORNER.

Songs of the Underworld

Down at the Corner

Virginia was airy, a fair little fairy
Born of the best of blood;
Her mother was proud, and she allowed
Virgie to do as she would;
And it was not writ, she thought a bit
Of what her child might learn
In running about, when she was out
Where the street lamps dimly burn.

*Down at the corner, the poisonous corner
Where children love to go;
This is the spot, the red hot spot
Where Satan's tapers glow;
This is the place, the luring place,
Primer of vice and woe.*

Virginia is old and it is told
E'en to this late day,
When she went bad, citily bad,
Her mother pined away.
Nobody knows of Virgie's woes,
And no one seems to care;
But that old spot, that crimson spot,
Still lures the children there.

*Down at the corner, the poisonous corner
Where children love to go;
This is the spot, the red hot spot
Where Satan's tapers glow;
This is the place, the luring place,
Primer of vice and woe.*

Songs of the Underworld

The Idol I Lost

*I'm a man who always loved to play,
Gleefully loved to play,
Since I was born, both night and morn,
I've always had my way,
But now I know the depths of woe,
That breaks the heart, they say.*

*I have loved a woman and loved her well,
For Oh, so many years,
And it isn't the thought that I've lost her,
That grips and grinds and sears,
And it isn't the thought she's another's
That brings these briny tears.*

*'Tis the mem'ry of her laughing,
And the dancing of her eyes,
And the thrilling of her kisses,
And the luring of her sighs,
And how she tried to stick to me,
Like every woman tries.*

*I placed her on a pedestal,
I knelt and worshipped there,
And then I'd turn my back and play,
And leave my idol fair,
And go away to other Gods,
Those Gods who did not care.*

Songs of the Underworld

My idol has been stolen,
But she's worshipped I am sure,
And her lover may be honest and,
Maybe his love is pure,
But at her shrine I'll worship,
Just as long as I endure.

*I'm a man who always loved to play,
Gleefully loved to play,
Since I was born, both night and morn,
I've always had my way,
But now I know the depths of woe,
That breaks the heart, they say.*

Songs of the Underworld



FANCIFUL FANTINE FAIR

Songs of the Underworld

Fanciful Fantine Fair

I am dreaming tonight of Fantine,
Fanciful Fantine fair.
My wife is reading the paper,
Sitting beside my chair,
Fanciful Fantine, gay little Fantine,
She with the golden hair.

Do you recall my dearie,
Fanciful Fantine fair?
The ruby light in my studio,
The quaint old gothic chair,
Fanciful Fantine, fond little Fantine,
Yours were the kisses rare.

I will not tell the story,
Fanciful Fantine Fair,
For lots, and lots, and lots of things,
I ne'er would tell, I swear.
Fanciful Fantine, gay little Fantine,
Where are you Fantine, where?

Don't you recall the music,
Fanciful Fantine fair?
Drifting down the hallway,
From hidden student lair?
Fanciful Fantine, coy little Fantine,
Woman beyond compare.

I kissed your eyes, your lips, and ears,
Fanciful Fantine fair.
And oft, your throat, and shoulders,
Tangled my hand in your hair.
Fanciful Fantine, coy little Fantine,
Light as the summer air.

Songs of the Underworld

You posed as Ariadne,
Fanciful Fantine fair,
For the picture that brought me honor,
And brought you—black despair.
Fanciful Fantine, poor little Fantine,
Where are you Fantine, where?

Songs of the Underworld

The Locket of Ashes

Helen played Fra Diàvolo
In worn and tattered hose.
Harry saw her and loved her,
They married and joined their woes.
Then Harry sickened and died,
And Helen was left to weep.
She cremated him, it was his whim
To cheat a mouldy sleep.

Helen took some of his ashes,
And likewise a curl of hair,
And put them in a locket,
Upon her bosom fair.
She swore she'd always wear them;
As some of us sometimes swear.
But there came a lover wooing,
And there came a lover rare.

Helen stood by the seashore,
Stood by her lover rare,
She opened the locket of ashes,
She gazed at Harry's hair.
And then to prove her new love
As true as love could be,
She kissed the locket and tossed it
Into the restless sea.

Songs of the Underworld

My Hunger

Come sit on the floor beside me dear,
Let me look into your eyes.
Let me see the waves of your blushes,
Let me hear your softened sighs—
For I am hungry, lover,
Hungry for homelike ties.

Let us paddle the stream together,
Let us lounge beneath the skies
In a land of fairest weather,
Where the voice of woe ne'er cries;
For I am hungry, lover,
Hungry for homelike ties.

Slip your youthful arms about me,
Arms that the artists prize.
Tell me your dreams and fancies,
Make me wonderwise;
For I am hungry, lover,
Hungry for homelike ties.

I've had enough of travail,
The primrose I despise.
Sing me to sleep, with a song dear,
Sing me to paradise;
For I am hungry, lover,
Hungry for homelike ties.

Songs of the Underworld

That Unforgettable Night

I was sitting alone one evening,
As I often sat alone,
When there came a rapid ringing,
On my telephone.
And a woman's voice made answer,
To my Hello! Hello!
"Let us go out this evening
As we used to years ago."

And I hung up the receiver,
And then began to dress.
"I will go out this evening,
Why not? Certainly! Yes!
It has been years since I have felt,
The warmth of her caress."
Then I kissed the tiny paper
That bore her home address.

I did go out that evening,
And I never can forget,
The tingling touch of her kisses,
Her lips, so warm and wet.
And the lure of her eyes is calling,
Calling, to me yet;
And the scent of her raven tresses,
Spun from purest jet.

And the peeping pretty ankles,
And the shoulders snowy white,
And the still, still, room beguiling,
In rapturous delight.
And I was lost in a maze of love,
Do what e'er I might.
And I heard the church chimes warning,
Hourly through the night.

Songs of the Underworld

What do I care—it is over?
A man can't live alway;
What do I care that she left me;
Forgot me the following day.
The memory she gave to me,
Will last to my dying day,
And I never want to see her,
Now that she's old and gray.

Songs of the Underworld



The Women Who Walk

The street lights gleam, and the buildings tower,
In the lazar city by the sea,
While the silent gloom, like stinking spoom,
Awakens misery.
And women tramp the streets so damp,
Shorn of their modesty.

Their smile is hard, and their faces wan,
And they cringe as they walk along.
There's none of God in their sinful nod
As they hum a ribald song.
But these women tramp the streets so damp,
To the streets their kind belong.

There is much of woe, in their frozen hearts,
Where erst dwelt melody;
They've wedded shame, and lost their name,
For all eternity.
Always they tramp, the streets so damp,
Lost in iniquity.

Songs of the Underworld

God came down, one night on the town
To learn if he could, whence came
These accusing sobs, from the drunken mobs,
That seemed his throne to blame.
He there did tramp, the streets so damp,
Beside the women of shame.

But he soon went back to his harpists,
Back to infinity;
And he said as he went "The real intent
Is born of poverty,
The women who tramp the streets so damp,
Need more than chastity."

He strolled through the streets of Jasper
He came to the judgment hall,
And then he took the sinner's book,
And wrote in infinite scrawl
"The women who tramp the streets so damp,
Have drunk this cup of gall."

* * * * *

Pity them, cheat them, curse them all,
Enjoy them if you must
Some man's to blame, for a woman's shame,
Because she built on trust.
And those who tramp the streets so damp,
Are lost through manly lust.

Songs of the Underworld

The Delayed Echo

I stand on the sands where the sea recedes,
And the fog rolls heavily in.
I look away toward distant shores,
I list to the ocean's din.
From fields afar, comes a perfume,
Of flowers, and Earth to me.
The whole wide world is calling,
Calling, of things to be.

My dim eyes try to pierce the fog,
I stand as in a spell.
Out of the vast, vague void there comes,
Clear tones, as from a bell.
I hear the strains of a wondrous chord,
A rich full melody,
I do not look at things out there,
Those things that are to be.

The song rolls in, above, around,
And swells with rhythmic note,
Until it seems, I am asleep,
With memories remote.
My youth returns, garbed full in white.
With the tuneful rare refrain,
I stand as I stood, when I was young,
And the world was mine to gain.

I see myself, on this same spot
Where earth and sea divide,
When my young eyes looked o'er the seas,
And Hope became my bride.
I swore that I would dare to do
Those things a man should do;
My arm was strong, my honor wide,
And all the world was new.

Songs of the Underworld

The song I hear brings back to me,
The deeds I've left undone.
These things I promised I would do
At manhood's dawning sun.
This is a blameless rhapsody,
Drifting through the air,
With only joy, and youth, and bliss,
And conscience debonair.

It all comes back now through the years,
The years that have rolled away.
And the song is the same as it used to be,
The self same song today.
I tingle and glow with exquisite joy.
As I listen to the song.
A voice is murmuring from the sea
"To the Now do you belong."

So I learn the song is, after all,
But the echo of the song
I used to sing in dear, dead days,
I do to the Now belong.
The echo mocks me jeeringly,
The mist is in my eye,
But still I look for joys beyond
The line of sea and sky.

I am afraid to go back now,
I feel I must go on.
To try again the untried seas,
To brave another dawn.
Yet sweet it is to hear this song,
Of my youth of long ago,
When there were no darkened days of pain,
Nor withering nights of woe.

Songs of the Underworld

The Friend of the Underdog

I'll not count as lost, those moments
The Master has given to me
To live, if I may be making
Laughter from misery.
I'd be a steersman through life's black fog;
A sort of a friend to the Underdog.

The word of praise I do not seek.
The lure of gold won't tempt me.
I'm not a Christian gentleman,
So please don't so exempt me;
But when all my life you catalogue
Just write:—"A friend to the Underdog."

I've struck my blow and drank my glass.
I've dipped my soul in grime.
I know the worth of a friendly grip,
The look of love sublime.
But in life's great scheme I'm but a cog.
Still—I'm a friend to the Underdog.

I've seen the strong in a mad parade.
I've watched the crowd go by,
I've seen the gloomy twilight fade,
I've helped a harlot die.
And I know the Lost, some how *do* clog.
Still, I'm a friend to the Underdog.

The Underdog is much alone—
A child of dank despair.
A smile for him is an angel's touch—
A peep at God's own chair.
There's a heap of joy in a dialogue,
If you're a friend to an Underdog.

Songs of the Underworld

I'll not be much in the great "round up,"
Just one of the wildest bunch.
But when they start to branding souls,
Some how I've got this hunch.
They'll not brand me "bar-circle rogue"
But weigh me in as an Underdog.

Songs of the Underworld

The Curse

It is not for gold,
That souls are sold,
And hearts are crushed and torn.
Not the time we tarry
But the load we carry
That makes the world forlorn.
The lack of purse
Is not the curse;
'Tis ape-ing, the gaping,
World of hearts inverse.

I was a youth, and she a maid,
We met, and at my conscience laid,
Dread things, I could not understand.
She spurned my heart, but took my hand,
And the ring she wore, as a wedding band,
Was the curse, and worse,
Both tense and terse,
Mark, of the ape-ing, gaping
World of hearts inverse.

She often smiles and beckons me,
Swift wingéd all forebodings free,
And boldly out of self I sway.
She drifts along pursued by woe;
I fear for her but do not know
What thoughts are hers, from day to day.
This is the curse, and worse,
For her and me, we cannot see,
This ape-ing, gaping
World of hearts inverse.

Songs of the Underworld

Oh, the silent nights of care,
And the days that dawned despair,
That are writ upon our minds.
They hold a vague forgetfulness,
Are filled with much regretfulness,
And sigh like marshy winds.
This is the curse, and worse,
The tense and terse—
Part of the ape-ing, gaping
World of hearts inverse.

I cannot drop the vicious elf,
It starves my soul to gorge itself.
I would not drop it, if I could,
I could not stop it, if I would.
And so quite fiendishly it floats
Through dragging years, and ever gloats.
This is the curse, and worse,
It will not flee, away from me,
For I'm this curse, and worse,
I'm ape-ing, this gaping
World of hearts inverse.

